CREATIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE & NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION: URBAN INFORMALITY FACILITATING INVENTIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES IN BERLIN, GERMANY AND SOUTH FLORIDA

BY

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CAPSTONE

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ABSTRACT

This research project identifies inventive ways of revitalizing distressed neighborhoods in post-recession, urban landscapes. The study uses a case-study method in order to delve into a critique of community development strategies that are responding to urban decline and retraction of services, as well as dissecting the role of *urban informality* in the creation of inventive resiliency measures in impoverished areas of the city. In the end, the project aims to introduce a new discourse in the area of community development, one that brings to light informal processes that exist in our cities and how these processes may aid in the creation of more effective ways to strengthen neighborhoods without displacing residents.

Lessons-learned from previous research in South Florida highlight the role of informal economies in distressed neighborhoods, and how these informal processes are allowing public entities to plan, design, and make way for informality to thrive in its' own right. This work more specifically takes an ethnographic approach to understanding how these principles are manifest in neighborhood-level governance in Berlin. Specifically, this research identifies how *the State* has worked to mitigate the effects of *urban decay* on peripheral communities. This research found that *Neighborhood Management Planning* is being used by the State to help distressed neighborhoods (also known as 'Kiez') get back on their feet. More specifically, the project found that the State has been largely successful in strengthening disadvantaged neighborhoods through local governance and empowerment.

Finally, the report ends with a discussion of the structural differences between the two contexts and how expressions of informality differ between the two. This section highlights questions for further research and calls for more effective community development by aiming to keep residents put, rather than displace- a process all too well known as, gentrification.

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Introduction

Across many disciplines, including urban planning, the years 2007-2008 demarcate a period in U.S. history characterized by nationwide economic distress. Consequently, many, if not all cities found themselves having to respond to rising rates of unemployment, foreclosure, population decline, and a deteriorating urban landscape with economic development strategies in order to attract new businesses and people (Weichmann, 2012). This state of distress is being described as *Urban Shrinkage* within the academic and practical discourse, where the term attempts to describe a type of city that, following its economic decline, faces population loss, and therefore provides a new subject to urban sociology (Grossman, et al. 2008). While the attempt to combat the secondary effects of shrinkage have been strong, this report argues that structural interventions from planning institutions and governmental bodies in post-recession America have not been effective in mitigating urban shrinkage, specifically within *community-development planning*. This claim is founded on the notion that community development is employed as a tool for economic development, and the eventual displacement of disadvantaged people groups. To support this position, this report provides a critique of contemporary community-development in post-crisis America, while introducing *urban informality* as a culvert for a comparative analysis of ethnographic research in South Florida and Berlin, Germany- to better inform future community-development practices.

Report Outline

This report is broken into three sections. The first section is dedicated to contextualizing the notion of creative local governance and neighborhood revitalization strategies in contemporary planning. In order to do so, the section provides a backdrop for the two case study sites that focuses on how economic distress led to *Urban Shrinkage*, how *shrinkage* led to *retraction*, and finally how *retraction* led to a rise in *urban informality*.

The second section introduces the two cases, situating their inventive community development measures in a general critique of community development and its' tie to gentrification. The two cases present different responses from public entities in terms of policy and planning, and highlight the benefits of embracing shrinkage with proactive mitigation. The prominent, original research in this section uses two neighborhoods in Berlin, Germany to conduct an ethnographic study on the role of the State and the on-the-ground response to *Neighborhood Management Planning.*

Finally, the third section is devoted to a discussion of the different contexts, efficacy of Neighborhood Management in Berlin, and questions for further research. Additionally, this section explores the structural-political differences between Germany and the US, which create different expressions of informality- both of which are mitigated through different strategic planning mechanisms.

Contextualizing Creative Local Governance and Neighborhood Revitalization

1) *Urban Shrinkage as a pre-condition for retraction*

This report makes no attempt to delve into the causes of economic distress during the most recent recession of the U.S. Instead, this research uses economic distress during this period as a point of reference, for the deliberate intensification of marginalization from public entities.

The year 2007 and 2008 in the United States can be characterized as the beginning of a new wave of distress. In fact, vacant homes, relocation of industries, and a dwindling urban core quickly became the norm for many cities. While the term *shrinkage* has been long used to describe urban distress, Haase argues that shrinkage can be typically manifested in a "dwindling population, emergence of vacant spaces, and the underuse of urban infrastructure" (Haase, 2014). While these hold true to the American context, Germany too, underwent severe shrinkage in recent history- specifically in the early-to-mid 90's. Wiechmann argues that *Urban Shrinkage* in Germany can be attributed to German reunification, falling birth rates, aging population, and general suburbanization trends (Wiechmann, 2012). Due to the similarities in both contexts, and particularly Germany's exposure to shrinkage close to a decade earlier than the U.S., this research was grounded in the notion that Germany has been successful in mitigating urban decline and planners in America have much to learn from the German response. However, it is important for this research to analyze how both entities initially responded to decline, which then gave way to expressions of *urban informality.*

2) Retraction as a response to Shrinkage

This report argues that prior to any formal intervention with problem areas within cities, both the German and American response led to the retraction of services, disinvestment, and a shift in attention from peripheral neighborhoods to those areas that were more economically viable and prosperous amidst decline. This response is much like the typical response that anyone would have in times of economic turmoil- one decides to cutback on unnecessary spending. However, when discussing the reaction of the two cases, it is important to understand the implications of such retraction.

Hospers argues that there are four ways that a city can respond to urban shrinkage. First, you can *trivialize* shrinkage, which is the act of simply doing nothing. Secondly, you could *counteract* decline by following the typical pro-growth model of planning. Third, you could *accept* decline and try to manage the effects of decline. Finally, cities could use shrinkage as a trigger for smart decline, or the *Utilization* of shrinkage (Hospers, 2014). Under this model, it can be said that in both cases, in Germany and the U.S., the response was one of pro-growth. This pro-growth response however, led to the retraction of services and investment from peripheral communities, which led to the intensification of marginalization of distressed neighborhoods.

In South Florida for instance, cities began to counteract decline with a shift in investment from peripheral communities to those areas that had greatest potential. The City of Lake Worth, for example, established the *Community Redevelopment Agency* in 2001, but put particular demand on this organization to implement economic development strategies for the city following the recession of 2007 (lakeworthcra.org). This shift in focus saw the disinvestment and retraction of 'planning' from peripheral neighborhoods to those areas that were deemed 'vital' by city planners and officials. Being a waterfront community, these economic development strategies were focused on the redevelopment and revitalization of those corridors that led to the ocean. This was a strategic move to reinvigorate the small, waterfront downtown corridor in hopes of attracting tourists and new residents. However, what were there implications of this switch in focus? Consequently, neighborhoods deemed non-vital happened to be caught in between these redevelopment corridors, which led to a faster dilapidation and deterioration of these marginalized neighborhoods. While a more detailed account of the South Florida case will be presented in the *Case Study* section of the report, it is important to understand at this point that urban shrinkage and its' response in South Florida, led to the retraction of services, planning efforts, and investment. This process led to heightened levels of rapid decline in neighborhoods that were already marginal, but became even more disenfranchised during this time.

The case of Germany, specifically Berlin, is a similar one. In the wake of shrinkage and all of its' effects, the city of Berlin found itself in a tough situation. Martinez-Fernandez argues, that the landscape of post-recession Berlin was one of decline- characterized by a reunification that brought about ill effects to the economy of Berlin, an aging population, industrial transformation, and a displacement of native-born Germans due to suburbanization and its' promise of cheaper land with more living space (Martinez-Fernandez, 2012). Additionally, Haussermann describes Berlin after the 1989 reunification, as a place influenced by three superimposed trends: deindustrialization, transformation from socialism to capitalism, and the

new mobility between the two halves of the city and between the neighborhoods in the East and the West (Haussermann, 2006). This state was truly one of decay, in describing the response from the city, he elaborates that construction investment during this time was channeled into major representative political and economic buildings, and as apartment were being in residential quarters in certain inner-city areas (and especially on the periphery of the city), the old neighborhood were left to decay (Haussermann, 2006). One such project that led to the intensification of marginalization of peripheral communities is that of the Mediaspree-Projeckt. Stephan Lanz describes this project as a public-private partnership that aimed at transforming 180 hectares of inner-city land into a dense, creative-industry cluster of redevelopment with global appeal (Lanz, 2013). Consequently, the disinvestment in other communities saw the intense downward spiral of development, quality of life, and economic vitality of marginal spaces. Lanz adds that this project led to growing social problems and increasing poverty in post-reunification Berlin- paralleled by an increasing spatial segregation of the poor and of the migrant population (Lanz, 2013).

Due to the retraction of city services and investment, which has intensified the disenfranchisement of marginal neighborhoods, expression of informality are starting to flourish in both contexts as a response to certain market variations. The following section will look at the different expressions of informality in the city of Berlin and the South Florida region, in response to the state of decline following economic turmoil.

3) Retraction making way for Informality

"A street vendor pushes a cart with ice popsicles down the sidewalk. At the street corner, some day laborers solicit work by raising 'labor for hire' signs each time a motorist passes by. Such activities, informality, happens beyond the regulation of the States…" (Mukhija, 2014).

The rise of informal economies, processes, and lifestyles amongst the least desirable signifies a response to certain failures in the market. Informality and the process it implies picks up the pieces where the formal realm is broken. As seen above, the expressions of informality tend to be associated with the simple act of trying to survive in a system that demands the flow of capital for economic vitality. This section will bring to light the different forms of informality being seen in the South Florida region, as well as the informal activities that arose in reunified Berlin-where there was as shift from a more socialist system to a capitalist one. As stated above, a landscape characterized by decline and retraction leads to the upsurge of other means to *get by.* These means are seen as informal and come in response particularly to failures within a capitalist system. While the scope of this paper is not to delve into a critique of capitalism, it is important to be cognizant of the need for informality within marginal communities- in the end, this is how communities cope with inequality.

"The informal sector provides the poorest and the neediest with much-needed opportunities to earn a livelihood" (Hart, 1973).

In 2012, as part of a *Neighborhood Plan* for the Western Neighborhood in Lake Worth, Florida, a research study was conducted to help formulate more responsive, contextual community development strategies for the residents of this community. Using ethnographic methods, the study found that there was a disconnect between the discourse had in the formal realm versus the informal, regarding the state of the neighborhood. City officials were under the impression that the neighborhood was in severe decline and all data supported this theory. But under a closer eye, the research revealed that the community was flourishing in ways that formal institutions could not capture. Day laborers were seen at the local Home Depot, waiting for motorists to pick them up for a days' labor. Early in the morning, an old school bus, repurposed as a quasi-public transit system, could be seen picking up farm workers and taking them out to the fields. The same bus was seen returning at the end of the workday and making routine stops within the neighborhood. In the same fashion, storefronts advertised money exchange services, "envios" or shipping services for money or goods, dining, retail shopping, and all within the same establishment. Theses stores were scattered around the community and really epitomizes the idea of a *one-stop shop*. But the research did reveal one flaw- the lack of green space. Vacant parcels are all too normal of a sight in a decaying neighborhood, therefore the project was able to recommend the notion of a network of green spaces, where vacant parcels could be agglomerated into a larger network of green space within the neighborhood. This network could then be repurposed or used for sports, recreation, gardens, and/or farming. This recommendation is just one instance where a change in the designation of land-use could be used to enhance the quality of life of residents where informality flourishes, but in the following sections we will see how various South Florida cities have been able to *make way* for informality.

In the Berlin case, Haussermann discusses its' history- that "unlike the tendency in capitalist cities to displace residential uses from the center and adjacent quarters by expanding tertiary uses, apartments in the socialist city were intentionally built in the center and surrounding districts" (Hausserman, 2006.) Therefore, if we analyze the rise of informality in Berlin as a result of a shift from a socialist to a more capitalist system, we begin to uncover the spatial dimension to the rise of informality in Berlin. Informality, as seen above, began within the housing stock- where migrants and 'undesirables' used vacant spaces for housing (squatting). As a result of a shifting focus of development in Berlin, many housing units became vacant and available for squatting. Holm argues that squatting in Berlin can be directly connected to strategies of Urban Renewal in post-reunified Berlin (Holm, 2011). Another expression of informality in Berlin was that of *temporary use.* Colomb argues that because there was a disinvestment in 'non-vital' sections of the city, temporary use of vacant spaces became the norm (Colomb, 2012). Furthermore, he explains that Berlin's nomadic clubs and temporary events became the users and an incredibly successful, inclusive, and innovative part of the urban culture in the early 2000's (Colomb, 2012). As such, we can begin to see how expressions of informality can be attributed to more capitalist systems, where the safety nets necessary to absorb market failures do not exist.

Contextualizing Creative Local Governance and Neighborhood Revitalization: Recap

"Informality is back on the agenda for urban planning" (Roy, 2005).

The above section aimed at contextualizing the research study conducted in Berlin, Germany as well as previous studies on the South Florida region, within the broader forces that cities in both contexts underwent in times of turmoil. More specifically, the case studies in the next section are grounded in the notion that the initial responses to shrinkage, in either context, were not effective and intensified the marginalization of the already disenfranchised. Furthermore, the remainder of the report focuses on the 'Why is this important?' by discussing how a neglect of informality and the livelihood of those peripheral communities will lead to further inequality, distress, and decline. Ananya Roy argues, "Informality, and the state of exception that it embodies, is produced by the state. To deal with informality therefore partly means confronting how the apparatus of planning produces the unplanned and unplannable" (Roy, 2005). Perhaps another interpretation of Roy's powerful claim would suggest that by confronting the planning apparatus, we can then analyze how formal market-based planning perpetuates marginalization and then rethink how to mitigate the implications of this antiquated style of planning.

SECTION 2:

Case: Berlin, Germany

Introduction

With an understanding of the forces that create expressions of informality, it was important to conduct research in a location that has been able to effectively mitigate *Urban Shrinkage* within peripheral communities. *Effective* meaning, the use of creative measures of intervention such that communities are made better but not gentrified. It was in the fall of 2013 that this background information and understanding was acquired, and then in the spring of 2014, the NEURUS Fellowship was awarded for travel to Berlin- to conduct independent research. Berlin was chosen due to its' diversity, long history of transformation, and heavy-handed policy which tends to benefit the socially undesirable. As such, Berlin provided an ideal case study for inventive community development in peripheral communities. The following section outlines the methodology for the research conducted in the city.

Methodology

Identifying and Locating Distress: Data Collection & Site Selection

In order to carry out this research, it was important to first identify and define what "periphery" or "peripheral communities" meant. Griffiths most effectively and simply explains the notion: "Unlike other forms of marginalization, marginal communities located in geographic areas have one common characteristic which underlies all the other symptomatic expressions of that condition. They are all communities having a low level of economic activity the depressing

effects of which pervade every aspect of life" (Griffiths, 1988). With this definition in mind, it became clear that identifying marginal communities meant that "economic distress" had to be defined in order to select research sites within the city.

In response to high levels of economic distress after the reunification of Berlin, the State found that distress was significant within inner-city neighborhoods and that is what important to intervene, in order to create more healthy communities. In 1999, to combat the negative effects of economic distress, the Berlin Senate established the national 'Social City Initiative' (quartiersmanagement-berlin.de). This initiative aimed at helping disadvantaged inner city neighborhoods through involving residents in decision-making processes affecting their local neighborhood. In order to do so, they went a step further and started the 'Berlin Neighborhood Management Program'-also in 1999. Much like this research, they were tasked with identifying areas with distress and to do so, they established 4 measures of distress:

1) Unemployment
2) Long-Term Unemployment
3) Welfare Recipients
4) Welfare Recipients under the age of 15

At this time, the Senate identified 15 neighborhoods or 'kiez' with special developmental needs. The program was initially funded by the State and was to be re-evaluated after a period of 3 years. With continued success the program was 'realigned' in 2005 to include more neighborhoods and in the same year established 'intervention levels' for distressed locations. This method breaks down the most severe cases of distress by strong, intermediate, and low level intervention depending on the needs of the neighborhood (quartiersmanagement-berlin.de). By 2008, the program included 34 different neighborhoods in both East and West Berlin. But, how was success measured and how was distressed identified?

In 2007, using the distress measures outlined above, the Senate began tracking data on all 440 neighborhoods in Berlin. Using these 4 measures, they were able to identify distress on a yearly basis, to better inform their program and its' location for future years. In order to evaluate whether a specific program was effective, the 4 measures were checked for alleviation as well as performing a systematic analysis of the urban fabric in which the neighborhood was located. This analysis included a study on the demographic, property values of the area, and general development trends of the neighborhood (quartiersmanagement-Berlin.de) As such, if the neighborhood changed drastically in the latter measures, this meant that the neighborhood gentrified. This was deemed as an unsuccessful attempt due to the nature of displacement while a neighborhood gentrifies. As such, the goal of Neighborhood Management in Berlin is to enhance the quality of life and economic vitality of the affected residents, but also keep them where they are.

Borrowing the same structure and process of site selection, neighborhood-level data for the four social measures were obtained from the Berlin Senate clearinghouse. This data was broken down by neighborhood ID number, neighborhood name, population of the neighborhood, and then followed by the 4 social measures (unemployment, long-term unemployment, employed welfare recipients, and welfare recipients under the age of 15). These measures are said to be the

most appropriate way to measure distress in a community and thus, was used in this research as a metric for distress.

2013 Indicators of Social Undesirability

% Share of Unemployment

ID	Name	% share
08010509	Schulenburgpark	18.71
05020523	Maulbeerallee	18.54
10020519	Boulevard Kastanienallee	18.4
10020412	Alte Hellersdorfer Straße	18.18
02010103	Moritzplatz	17.85
10020415	Hellersdorfer Promenade	17.59
10020416	Böhlener Straße	17.58
08010508	Weiße Siedlung	16.55
05010312	Kurstraße	15.84
02010104	Wassertorplatz	15.58

% Share of Long-term Unemployment

ID	Name	% Share
10020519	Boulevard Kastanienallee	7.26
10020416	Böhlener Straße	6.87
02010103	Moritzplatz	6.78
05020523	Maulbeerallee	6.52
09030902	Wohngebiet II	6.47
10020415	Hellersdorfer Promenade	6.45
10020412	Alte Hellersdorfer Straße	6.26
02010104	Wassertorplatz	5.83
09020501	Oberschöneweide West	5.73
10010204	Wuhletalstraße	5.61

% Share of Employed recipients of State-Aid

ID	Name	% Share
08010509	Schulenburgpark	43.02
08010508	Weiße Siedlung	41.9
05020523	Maulbeerallee	37.6
02010103	Moritzplatz	37.57
02010104	Wassertorplatz	37.31
08010212	Rollberg	36.33
02010102	Mehringplatz	34.99
01022202	Heidestraße	34.65
12302109	Treuenbrietzener Straße	34.17
10020412	Alte Hellersdorfer Straße	33.68

% Share of Recipients of State-aid under 15

ID	Name	% Share
05020523	Maulbeerallee	78.28
08010509	Schulenburgpark	77.35
08010508	Weiße Siedlung	76.55
02010103	Moritzplatz	76.3
08010118	Silbersteinstraße	75.73
01044201	Reinickendorfer Straße	75.35
01022101	Huttenkiez	74.01
01033203	Humboldthain Nordwest	73.21
12302109	Treuenbrietzener Straße	73.14
08010212	Rollberg	72.48

Figure 1: Table of Top 10 worst neighborhoods in Berlin (Moritzplatz and Wassertorplatz are used interchangeably)

The figure above is not a comprehensive list of all Berlin neighborhoods, but shows how the data was formulated for analysis. This data then became an essential aspect of a spatial analysis performed on Berlin, as a whole.

The use of ArcGIS

While one simple way of choosing sites could have been running a correlation analysis of the social measures, this research found that the use of ArcGIS might facilitate a more accurate depiction of distress and thus, lead to a more effective selection of research sites. Neighborhood-level .shp files were also obtained from the Senate clearing house and they provided a simple boundary line of each neighborhood in Berlin. The next step was to join the tabular data with the geographic symbology in ArcGIS. After joining the data, it was important to create a metric that captures all four measures, instead of finding concentration levels for each individual measure. As such, a simple categorization method was created;

	Distress Levels			
Distress Measures	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Unemployment	0 - 5	5.1 - 10	10.1 - 15	15.1 - 20
Long-Term Unemployment	0 - 2	2.1 - 4	4.1 - 6	6.1 - 8
Employed, Welfare Recipients	0 - 12	12.1 - 24	24.1 - 36	36.1 - 48
Child Welfare Recipients	0 - 20	20.1 - 40	40.1 - 60	60.1 - 80

*Child = < 15 years old

* Figures are in percentages of neighborhood populations

Figure 2: Distress Level Categorization

By creating this categorization, it was possible to use simple chloropleth type symbology to show the highest concentration of distress in the city. In order to choose an accurate site for the research, the most recent data available was used- year 2013.

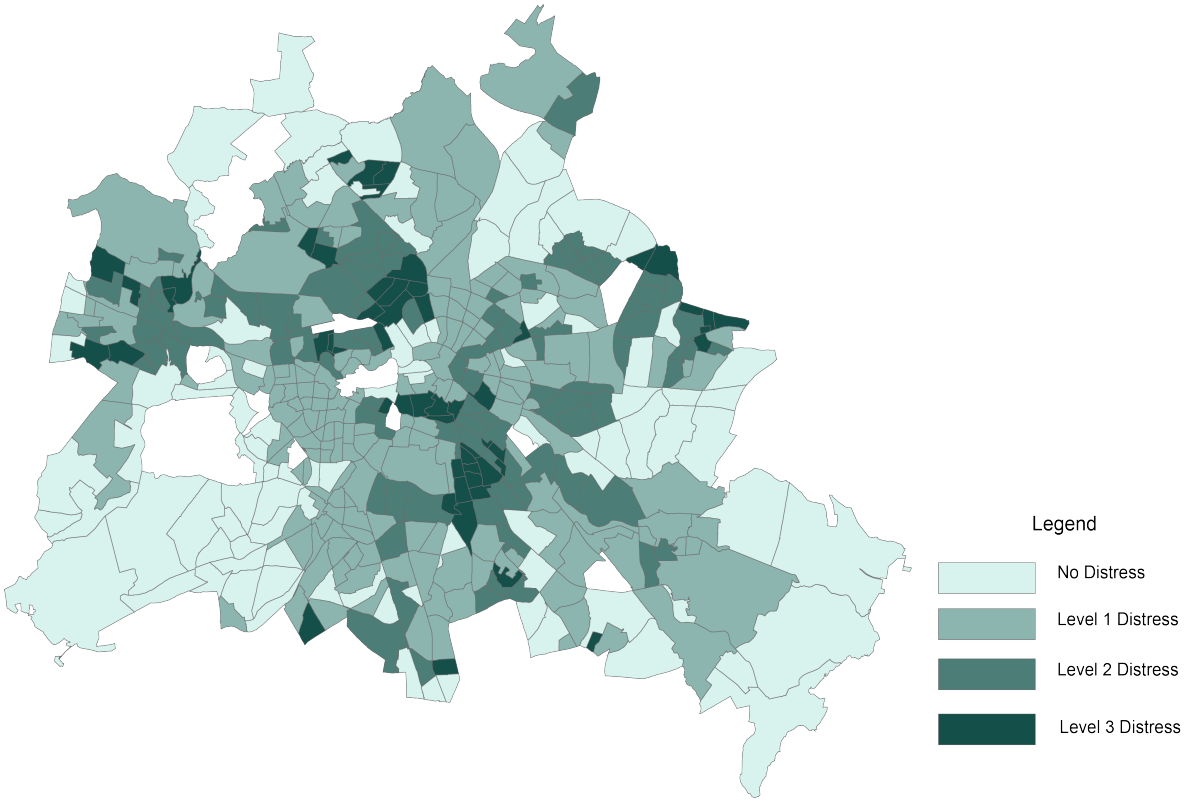

Figure 3: 2013 Distress in Berlin, Germany

For the year 2013, you can see that high distress levels tend to be concentrated in pockets, but especially in central Berlin. Lighter shades of blue denote areas of lesser distress, and it becomes apparent that suburban communities are less distressed than other communities. For this purposes of this research project, the two center-most neighborhoods were chosen- depicted by dark blue with a white boundary line around them. These two neighborhoods were Wassertorplatz and Zentrum Kreuzberg in Central Berlin. The map also depicts neighborhoods that are considered as green/open space. These areas are left hollow, as no data is correlated to these open spaces.

Distress Measure	*Wassertorplatz*	*Zentrum Kreuzberg*
Unemployment	15.58%	17.85%
LT Unemployment	5.83%	6.78%
Welfare Recipients	37.31%	37.57%
<15 W. Recipients	72.07%	76.3%

Figure 4: Distress Measures for Selected Sites

Wassertorplatz Profile

Wassertorplatz is an urban residential neighborhood in Central Berlin, 32 hectares large, and characterized by tall, monolithic residential towers, which were constructed in the social housing projects of the 1960's and 1970's (quartiersmanagement-wassertorplatz.de). The neighborhood is made up on 8,234 inhabitants from over 66 countries and the percentage of residents with a migrant background is an astonishing 72%. In terms of the 4 social measures however, the neighborhood is experiencing some developmental issues. Wassertorplatz has an unemployment rate of 15.58% as of 2013, well above the 6% Berlin average. In regards to LT unemployment, the neighborhood ranks 8th for 2013, with a 5.83% of total residents chronically unemployed. Welfare recipients make up 37.31% of the total population for the neighborhood, well above the 5.6% citywide average. Lastly, 72% of children under the age of 15 are considered welfare recipients. This is an astonishing percentage and well above the 38.5% city average.

Zentrum Kreuzberg Profile

Zentrum Kreuzberg, adjacently located to Wassertorplatz, is very similar in terms of the urban fabric. Much of the neighborhood is made up on social housing units built in the 1970's. The neighborhood is equally diverse and becoming a hub for culture, creativity, and innovation. Unfortunately, the neighborhood is in worse condition that its' counterpart in terms of the 4 social measures set by the Berlin Senate. In terms of unemployment, the neighborhood has a 17.85% of unemployed residents. Long-term unemployment is at 6.78% for the community. In regards to Welfare recipients, Zentrum Kreuzberg ranks 4th in both categories within the city, with a 37.57% share of the total neighborhood population on welfare and 76.3% of children under the age of 15 on welfare.

Additionally, due to the high levels of distress in each of the measures (employment, long-term unemployment, employed welfare recipients, and child welfare recipients), the city of Berlin has designated these two neighborhoods as sites needing 'strong intervention.' According to the Berlin Neighborhood Management Program this applies to areas with predominantly above-average high proportion of the unemployed, migrant experiences and recipients of transfer payment payments and a high mobility (quartiersmanagement-berlin.de). In order to tackle the huge task of reversing these daunting realities of high unemployment and welfare recipients, the city decides to allocate more funding and more management personnel to each neighborhood by helping establish a partnership between the Berlin Senate for Urban Planning and the borough corresponding to that particular neighborhood. This partnership allows for an open stream of funding, information, and resources from federal government entities to neighborhood management teams.

In both Wassertorplatz and Zentrum Kreuzberg, these newly formed partnerships were materialized by creating neighborhood management teams that identify and analyze the specific needs of the neighborhoods. Once they identify these needs, the task is to train and educate local residents on the planning process in order to encourage citizen participation and increase a sense of ownership over their space for residents. In the end, this implementation strategy is facilitated by the Social City initiative- outlined above.

Qualitative Study

Once the two sites were selected, it was necessary to conduct a qualitative study on the two neighborhoods. This was done to gain a general understanding of the history and contemporary state of the neighborhoods, as well as learn what organizations are actively working with these neighborhoods. In order to gain this understanding and learn more about the locations field visits and personal interviews were conducted.

Field Visits

A total of 10 field visits were conducted in order to gain a greater knowledge base on the two neighborhoods. These field visits were founded on the guiding principles of Galen Cranz' forthcoming book, "Ethnography & Space." In this book, the author focuses on two main drivers of ethnographic research: architectural/physical interpretations and socio-cultural cues within sites. As such, these two drivers became guides for the multiple visits.

The first three visits were used to get a general idea, view, and impression of the two neighborhoods. Analyzing the urban fabric, the movement of people through spaces, and identifying connectivity to transit and services became the protocol for the field visits. The additional visits were used for personal interviews, the collecting of photographs, and an ethnographic study on the day to day processes, activities and urban fabric of the neighborhoods.

Wassertorplatz

Figure 5: A gathering point for residents in Wassertorplatz

As outlined above, the general impression of Wassertorplatz was that of an inner-city residential neighborhood. In fact, most of the structures were residential in nature and resembling of the modernist idealisms of monolithic residential towers. The neighborhood is well connected to the U2 subway line and the train station can be defined as a meeting place or hub of pedestrian activity. There is not much commercial activity within the neighborhood, the few stores that are located within the neighborhood resemble 'one-stop' shops, where you can eat, buy goods, and services all within one store. The residents were diverse and many of the shops reflected that diversity, as food options were ethnic in nature.

Zentrum Kreuzberg

Figure 6: Illegal Activity as an anchor for Zentrum Kreuzberg

Figure 7: Satellites as a cue for migrant population

Zentrum Kreuzberg is a more active neighborhood. Located adjacent of the very busy Kottbusser Tor U2 subway stop, and with a well defined commercial corridor, the neighborhood was more lively and more traveled by motorists and pedestrians. While many of the residential buildings still resemble the social housing units of the 1970's, graffiti artists and local residents have transformed the neighborhood into a more creative and vibrant space despite its' distress. Additionally, many of the shops and restaurants located in Zentrum Kreuzberg are ethnic in nature and provide its' residents with accessible good and services. A quickly gentrifying 'Oranienstraße' corridor bounds the neighborhood to the north, which surfaces some concerns for the Neighborhood Management Team of Zentrum Kreuzberg.

Personal Interviews

The purpose of the interview process was to gain a better understanding of the two site selections: Wassertorplatz and Zentrum Kreuzberg. Interviews were informal in nature, and sought to establish relationships.. In the end, 9 interviews were conducted with members of the Neighborhood Management Teams, residents of both neighborhoods, and Berlin urbanists that

were able to shed light on the development patterns of the city. These conversations were summarized to highlight the general themes surrounding the two neighborhood districts.

Interviewee questions were tailored to fit their role with the neighborhood. For example, if the interview was conducted on a resident, questions were geared towards understanding their experience as a resident. If the interviewee was a member of the Neighborhood Council, questions were focused on learning more about the *Neighborhood Management Planning* process and mechanism at the local level. Finally, urbanists were interviewed with questions pertaining to the natural development trends in the city, post reunification. These interviews helped to bridge the gap between contemporary planning issues in distressed locations with large, structural forces that affect the city's development. Sample questions are as follows:

For resident:

How long have you lived in [neighborhood]?
Where do you come from?
Why did you choose to move to this neighborhood?
What challenges do you see in your neighborhood?
How would you make your neighborhood better?

For Neighborhood Team Member:

When was Neighborhood Management implemented here?
What are the current goals of the team for this neighborhood?
How are you involving residents in the plan-making process?

For urbanist:

How did Berlin become so diverse after reunification?
What are the challenges being faced in marginal communities?

Interview Findings and Conclusions

For the purposes of the section, the interview findings will be broken down into the three sub-sections- one for each type of interviewee.

Residents' Opinion

A total of 5 residents were interview, 3 from Zentrum Kreuzberg and 2 from Wassertorplatz. All residents have lived in the neighborhoods between 3-7 years and chose to live in this location due to their low rent costs. When asked about the challenges within the neighborhood, the Zentrum Kreuzberg residents agreed that illegal activity is causing a safety issue within the community. All residents spoke on the topic of cultural integration and educational issues. Educational attainment and integration programs for children became a center of the conversation, as residents voiced a concern over the future of their children. It is apparent that immigrant populations are having trouble getting integrated into the German culture and system. Therefore, they feel that they are not only marginalized based on their income levels but also because of their ethnic background. Finally, residents expressed the fear of displacement. Just north of the two neighborhoods is the Oranienstraße corridor, which is experiencing much gentrification stemming from the center of the city and pushing outwards. These residents feel

that their neighborhood might be next and have the fear of being pushed out of their location. While property values have not be accounted for, residents express that the introduction of high end cafes and shops gives off the impression that certain population will be excluded from the every day activities of these locations. As such, a perception of social exclusion is being perpetuated by the ongoing gentrification of adjacent areas.

Neighborhood Management Team/Council

One neighborhood council member was interviewed during the research in Berlin. This council member pertained to the Zentrum Kreuzberg team and was very helpful in outlining the challenges of the location. Coincidentally, he is an ex-patriot, having lived in Berlin for over 10 years after relocating from the United States.

This interviewee revealed some of the challenges that the Neighborhood Management Team faces in Zentrum Kreuzberg. The first and foremost challenge is the notion of establishing a new community center within the neighborhood. In terms of urban design, the community anchor as of yet is a negative one. Drug dealers, encouraged to keep their illegal activity within the neighborhood boundaries by police, make up a large portion of what is 'perceived' as the neighborhood meeting place. But, neighborhood council members are looking for way to shift this center to a new location and with a better image. One such way is by repurposing an old theatre with a children's playground next to it. They would like to see this building become a meeting place for residents. These immigrant residents may access a place where culture, education, services, and care. There is also the idea of using these residents to spur art and cultural events within the neighborhood, with the overall goal of enhancing the quality of life of the resident of Zentrum Kreuzberg.

Also on the radar for the *Team*, is the idea of using a new community center as a place where children can access additional educational services and families can come to learn cultural integration, the German language, and the process of naturalization within this new country. Therefore, the notion of effective urban design becomes the issue because it is important to first mitigate the 'negative' community anchor. Creating an active, safe, and impacting community center where specific services may be accessed does this.

Figure 8: Illegal Drug Activity seen as an 'anchor' for the neighborhood

Figure 9: Repurposing of vacant building for new community center

Urbanist Opinion

Two urban scholars of Berlin were interviewed as part of the research project. Both of the interviewee's were asked questions pertaining to the ongoing gentrification of contemporary Berlin, as well as the general challenges facing marginal communities. First and foremost, the interviews revealed that the Berlin Senate has had to re-evaluate their Neighborhood Management program several times due to gentrification. In its' early years, the program became a tool for economic development and saw the displacement of residents for the introduction of a new demographic. While this was not intentional, the city's emphasis on welcoming the creative class became synonymous with welcoming innovative businesses and development. This process became one that encouraged new development in sectors of the city where Neighborhood Management was prevalent. Therefore, the newest 'version' of Neighborhood Management

focuses on building capacity and enhancing the quality of life of the residents. Building capacity means that the Neighborhood Management Teams have become responsible for educated neighborhood leaders on the plan-making process and governance framework for the fruition of inclusivity. Lastly, the neighborhood management teams are interested in enhancing quality of life rather than the urban fabric, in order to keep residents where they are and make them more economically viable. The two interviewee's also touched on the topic of economic development in Berlin. They discuss this tension between Neighborhood Management and the overall growth of Berlin. While the Neighborhood Management Program is beneficial to those on the ground, the city is experiencing heightened levels of unemployment and welfare recipients. As such, there must a balance between grass root planning and citywide economic development, in order to attract new industries and companies that might hire locals.

Case: South Florida (City of Lake Worth, Florida)- An Overview

Background

In 2011, a Neighborhood Study was conducted on the 'Western Neighborhood' of the city of Lake Worth, Florida. This study was carried out as a class project at Florida Atlantic University, within the School of Urban and Regional Planning- course name "Site Planning." The course objective was to use this neighborhood as a case study for the application of several different site-planning interventions in hopes of mitigating blight, economic distress, and urban decline. While the deliverable focused on economic development, community development, sustainability, and general urban design strategies, the distressed neighborhood was flourishing in ways not captured by formal planning interventions or organizations.

Informality in Lake Worth, Florida

Lake Worth, Florida is a coastal city in South Florida, characterized by its' small waterfront downtown and diverse residents. Unfortunately, this city was also a victim of the 2007-2008 national recession. In the aftermath of the recession, the city of Lake Worth established the Community Redevelopment Agency in hopes of bringing economic development to the city (lakeworthcra.org). One of the initial plans of the organization, much like many coastal communities, was to strengthen all corridors that led to the ocean in order to spark tourism and economic activity. This plan, the Lake Worth Redevelopment Plan, was implemented in 2011 and centered redevelopment on 10th Avenue and 6th Avenue- two East West corridors connecting the interstate (I-95) and the oceanfront (lakeworthcra.org). Consequently, this investment in these areas led to a disinvestment in the neighborhood located within these corridors and the waterfront areas.

Figure 10: Lake Worth, Western Neighborhood

This neighborhood, named the Western Neighborhood, with a lack of investment from the city and other organizations became a breeding ground for informal practices, economies, and urbanism. While our course and the project sought to 'fix' infrastructure problems, vacant lots, and general planning issues, the neighborhood was flourishing in other ways.

Field Observations

In order to view and record the informal activity that was happening in the neighborhood, field visits were used. Three different times were used to best capture activity- early morning, mid-day, and early evening. Being that this neighborhood was made up of primarily immigrant

families, and coming from an immigrant family, these times best represented work commutes and mid-day activities.

Day Labor

Every morning, starting at 5 in the morning, at the local Home Depot establishment, dozens of immigrant men wait in front of the store for day labor. Valenzuela defines this as persons who do not work under the same conditions and framework as full-time employees (Valenzuela, 2006). These persons do not work for corporate pay stubs with benefits; instead they are largely paid 'under-the-table' with cash payments and are contracted for very short periods of time. Many times these periods are most literally, for the day. In Lake Worth, you can see these people at many local establishments but Home Depot has become the largest location, concentration of day labor workers. Many of these workers specialize in the trades related to home improvement, construction, lawn maintenance, and other construction related tasks. As such, Home Depot has become a logical place for contractors to solicit cheap, day labor.

Figure 11: Informalized Day Labor (Source: GospelAction.com)

Informal Bus Routes

For those residents that do not specialize in the trades listed above, an informal bus route is operated to transport migrant farmworkers to and from the fields. The Guatemalan-Mayan Community Center was interviewed on this matter, and they shed some light on the process of the informal bus network and service. Due to the disinvestment from the city and organizations,

bus routes have become inadequate and no longer appropriately service the residents of the Western Neighborhood. As such, one or two families, many times better off then the rest, will purchase and outdated bus and repurpose it. These buses are then used as a quasi-bus service for the residents of the neighborhood. These routes run early in the morning and in the evening on order to pick up and drop off residents throughout the neighborhood. Interestingly, the bus route is an informal service but uses methodical stops throughout the neighborhood, operating much like a formal bus service.

Figure 12: Example of Migrant Worker Bus (Source: Lifeinaskillet.com)

Summary of Findings

While this particular neighborhood was deemed as lost by formal institutions, the site was flourishing in ways not captured by these entities. Census data reflects decline, but an in depth field observation would uncover a world of activity that is not seen by the city or other formal organizations like the Community Redevelopment Agency. The residents of this neighborhood are inventive, creative, and are using different methods of urbanism to survive. Rather than criminalize these activities and the residents, the purpose of this case study is to introduce the

discussion of inventive community development. If inventive populations are occupying our distressed communities, why not capture that innovation and create more context based community development? This report has aimed to bring this discussion to the fore, as cities become more diverse, globalized, and representative of populations that will do anything to survive. It is those informal responses to economic instability, which may lead to more effective community development in areas of distress. A discussion of why informality exists within the American context, and how it differs from the Berlin example will be covered in the following section.

Discussion and Conclusion

Differences between Germany and the U.S.

Without a doubt, the American context and German context differ greatly in terms of governance, but there do exist guiding principles found within Neighborhood Management that can be applied in the U.S. While this report does not aim to delve into a detailed dissection of the two governmental systems, it is important to understand how Neighborhood Management is facilitated in the German context, while grass root planning initiatives are usually taken on by non-governmental organizations in the U.S.

Germany, a country who's contemporary perception is shaped by it strong geo-political power is in many ways perpetuated by its' dedication to providing social services and welfare for its' least advantaged populations. These services and monetary assistance programs are implemented by the state and carried out by the '*Sozialgesetzbuch'* national policy, which establishes social security for the least advantaged (sozialgesetzbuch.de). While this provides safety nets for individuals, in the same fashion, a dedication to improving the livelihood of the least advantaged neighborhoods is facilitated by the Social City Initiative of 1999 (quartiersmanagement-berlin.de). Much like the safety net for individuals, the State, because of more socialist system, is able to provide a safety net for distressed neighborhoods. As a result, the State is able to directly fund neighborhood initiatives and provide assistance to these locations. This social safety net then becomes a mechanism for absorbing informality, as informality in more capitalist contexts is a response to the lack of social security and welfare.

As a result, informality in Berlin is much different then that of the South Florida context. Where in South Florida day labor, street vending, and large flea markets become vehicles for informal economies, the State hand in Germany is able to capture and mitigate these needs with government intervention/funding. Therefore, a program like that of Neighborhood Management is both facilitated and successful at mitigating distress, in part due to the strong presence of the State at the local level.

When looking at the South Florida example, informality as portrayed by informal economies attest to the fact that a more capitalist, market-driven system does not provide some of those safety nets to help the urban poor survive. As such, they are forced to survive using means and methods not captured by formal employment or economic activity. While this case does highlight some of the inadequacies in the American system, informality in the U.S. has become more creative as people become more inventive with their survival. This creativity at the

local level, allows for perhaps the creation of equally creative community development strategies to assist these population in their everyday activities.

What can be learned and taken away from the Berlin case?

The neighborhood management program in Berlin, Germany is one that is funded and spearheaded by State intervention. This type of program lacks application to the American context as the system is not designed to allow for government intervention in speedy and accessible way at the neighborhood level. However, neighborhood management in Berlin is creative inventive local governance strategies for distressed neighborhoods in Berlin. This program is training, educating, and creating a taskforce of residents that will be able to mitigate localized problems as they arise in their neighborhood. While the program in its' entirety might not be applicable to the American context, the notion of empowering the local through education, training, and work-shopping is one that may aid in the betterment of distressed neighborhoods in the U.S.

Secondly, the Berlin example teaches us that once trained, these taskforce teams are able to make way for informal, non-traditional planning practices to flourish. One example from the Berlin case study comes from Zentrum Kreuzberg's motivation to challenge definitions and interventions of urban design. Instead of building anew, the challenge in this neighborhood is about changing the 'anchor' of the community and shifting this to another location- one that is more inviting and secure to the residents of the community. Furthermore, Wassertorplatz' dedication to immigrant/refugee entrepreneurship sheds light on a new way of thinking about economic development. By encouraging immigrant entrepreneurship within a diverse community, Wassertorplatz is able to provide services and new linkages between ethnic groups. By extracting this principle, we might be able to formulate more inviting economic development in an increasingly globalized America. No longer should we completely rely on large scale economic development, but the small business entrepreneurs that might help distressed communities get back on their feet.

What does it all mean?

This case study has identified creative ways that cities can mitigate distress in the toughest areas of a given city. While the American system is not designed to allow for strong government intervention at the local level, perhaps we can apply some of the tactics used in Berlin. By employing small design interventions, deregulating ordinances, and empowering the local through education and training, we might be able to reverse the current discourse surrounding distressed neighborhoods in America. As seen in the Lake Worth example, simple signage is allowing for day labor to exist in a safe and designated space. As a result, this study aims to identify those small, but inventive strategies that may help alleviate distress in the U.S. Instead of criminalizing or dismissing informality in our cities, perhaps we have much to learn from the inventive nature of those that employ it.

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